



continuous conversion

INTEGRITY

by Sara Tusek

It seems that “integrity” is one of those words that people use quite casually, as if its meaning were so well-known as to be universally understood without further elaboration.

The dictionary meaning of integrity is simply “wholeness” or the state of being entire and undi-



vided. The derivation of the word is related to that of the mathematical term “integer,” which is a whole number (not a fraction). Integrity is, then, the condition of being whole.

CHRISTIAN INTEGRITY

A quick Google search for “Christian integrity” yields some intriguing results. The word “integrity” is embedded in the descriptions of key aspects of many Christian institutions: “Academic integrity,” “moral integrity,” “spiritual integrity”. Substituting the word “wholeness” for integrity in these phrases makes little sense without some specifics on what “wholeness” consists of in each circumstance.

The connotations of the word “integrity” when used in a Christian context seem go far beyond the basic definition. How does wholeness relate to academics? To morals? To spirituality? How can a Christian embody integrity without a good working definition?

The Bible has, not surprisingly, quite a bit to say about integrity. Yet finding a complete biblical definition of integrity is a bit elusive. It seems that the most pithy statements about (not actual definitions of) “integrity” are found in the Proverbs.

MISHLE SHLOMO

The English title of the book of Proverbs is simply the translation of the Hebrew title, Mishle Shlomo ~ Proverbs of Solomon * These sayings are the product of a man known in the Bible for his wisdom. Here you may find some insights into the nature of integrity, as God sees it:

Proverbs 11:3 The **integrity** of the honest keeps them on track; the deviousness of crooks brings them to ruin.

Proverbs 11:13 A gadabout gossip can't be trusted with a secret, but someone of **integrity** won't violate a confidence.

Proverbs 11:20 God can't stand deceivers, but oh how he relishes **integrity**.

Proverbs 14:32 The evil of bad people leaves them out in the cold; the **integrity** of good people creates a safe place for living.

Proverbs 20:28 Love and truth form a good leader; sound leadership is founded on loving **integrity**.

Integrity

From p. 1

MISHLE SHLOMO DECLARATIONS ABOUT INTEGRITY

Proverbs 11:3 The integrity of the honest keeps them on track; the deviousness of crooks brings them to ruin.

This verse speaks to the aspect of integrity which implies honesty. Integrity is contrasted with deviousness, making it clear that acting with integrity involves being straight-forward.

Proverbs 11:13 A gadabout gossip can't be trusted with a secret, but someone of integrity won't violate a confidence. Integrity here is seen as keeping secrets. People of integrity do not repeat confidences, but keep them inviolate, thus honoring the trust placed in them by the ones who confided in them.

Proverbs 11:20 God can't stand deceivers, but oh how he relishes integrity. Integrity is contrasted with deceit. People with integrity please God, because He hates lies. Integrity implies truthfulness and keeping one's word.

Proverbs 14:32 The evil of bad people leaves them out in the cold; the integrity of good people creates a safe place for living.

This verse highlights the safety and security of living with integrity. Thus integrity is more than a personal quality; it's also a source of blessing from God, the blessing of being safe and secure in God's protective provenance. Living with integrity results in a blessing.

Proverbs 20:28 Love and truth form a good leader; sound leadership is founded on loving integrity.

Here integrity is paired with love and truth. To understand the

phrase "loving integrity," substitute "truth" for "integrity." Then the adjective "love" modifies or describes "truth." The good leader's truth is delivered with love, not self-righteousness or vindictiveness.

INTEGRITY DEFINED

Honesty, straightforwardness, the ability to keep secrets, trustworthiness, the ability to honor a confidence, truthfulness, the ability to keep one's word, living in the safety and security of God's blessing, speaking the truth in love—these are the attributes of integrity as delineated by Solomon.

What, then, is integrity? That Google search we referred to earlier turned up all kinds of sites with the word "integrity": Christian music companies, high-school athletic associations, and gender-respecting organizations, as might be expected; but also scientific, statistical and manufacturing websites, in which integrity referred to completeness and trustworthiness, in a slightly different way. Chain-link fences have integrity; beakers and charts measure integrity; political diversity websites rest on integrity.

The person seeking the definition of integrity might be wise to consider the religious and secular together, and go for the least-common denominator: reliability and trustworthiness. Integrity is not confined to God-followers; we all recognize it when we see it. In a world shattered by sin, wholeness of any kind is distinctive. That's integrity.